1: Blackwood
787, 828

ON6 Buka
Kurtatchi

[For further information concerning the content of dreams and their interpretation, see category 159.]

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

775 about shouting that they were afraid of Maravin's *urar* which was chasing them. They refused to sleep in the hut that night, and crowded in with the boys in the other *tobar*. Next day they set energetically about finishing their own, the building of which had been in progress, in a very desultory fashion, for some time.

Hysterical dissociation

158 The *urar* are, in the native mind, held responsible for a mode of
775 behaviour which is classified by psychologists as a form of dissocia-
828 tion. The affected individual rushes about the place, often brandishing a knife or an axe, shouting quite unintelligibly, and threatening any person who crosses his line of vision. Although no one was actually hurt in the cases which came under my personal observation, the natives told me that physical injury is occasionally inflicted by persons in this condition, and that people have even been killed by them. Generally, however, the damage is confined to property. A man in this state is said to be *iburar* (struck by the spirits).

158 Five cases occurred in the village of Kurtatchi (with a population of about 130) during the nine months of my stay. Three of them followed each other rapidly, all three occurring within ten days; the fourth and fifth, with two months between them, took place after a lapse of some months. Although an individual explanation was given for two out of the three occurring in sequence, it may be that suggestibility played its part so that the behaviour of one was not without its effect on the others, but this is mere surmise. All the affected persons were men, one a *tsunaun*, the others commoners. Unfortunately, I can find nothing in my notes to indicate whether women are also liable to these attacks. As the condition is of some psychological interest, it may be worth while to describe these episodes in some detail. Two occurred at night, three in the day-time.

158 My first acquaintance with this phenomenon was made on one
775 occasion when I had strolled over casually to visit a neighbour, and
828 found a man named Sinke, who lived in another part of the village, lying on the ground behind the hut, naked, talking and gesticulating excitedly. Several people were sitting round, looking at him but taking no action. They called out to him that I was coming, but instead of covering himself with his loin-cloth as he would have done in the ordinary way, he swore volubly, and remained as

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

he was. One of the other men excused his behaviour to me, saying that an *urar* had got him. When he saw me he called out to me that an *urar* was inside him. The attack appeared to be passing off, for he added, in a more rational tone, that to-morrow he would tell me what the *urar* had done to him, at the same time pulling his loin-cloth over his body. Next day he came to me looking very ill, and asked for medicine, saying he had a headache. I gave him some aspirin and questioned him about the occurrence of the day before, but he said he could remember nothing about it. My servant said that was what always happened to people who were seized by *urar*, and that the headache was the usual sequel.

The second incident happened a few days later. Late one evening the village was in a state of great commotion, with much shouting and scurrying about and barking of dogs. Several men rushed up on to my verandah and shut themselves in the room, adjacent to my own part of the house, occupied by my servant. They said Pinari (the *tsunaun*) was *iburar* and was chasing them all. Shortly afterwards he came tearing past the fence, howling in a weird fashion, and threw something, which fell with a crash. Presently a boy came and said that Pinari had been found lying across his brother's grave in the old graveyard, and taken home, and that they thought he would be all right.

When I asked after Pinari next morning his wife said he was very ill. In the afternoon she came to beg some biscuits for him, 'because his mouth could not eat taro'. I visited him on the afternoon of the following day. He seemed pleased to see me but talked quite incoherently, chiefly about 'poisoning'. I could make nothing of any of it. Next day he seemed much better, and gave me an account of what had happened. He said he had been cleaning the road near the old graveyard, and had omitted the usual ceremony of blowing lime over the road to send away the *urar*, because the priest had forbidden it. The *urar* were angry with him and made him mad. He went to church, and on his way back he saw an *urar*. It was one of his brothers. It was standing beside the banana palm that grows near his house. Then he went mad and fought every one. Then he went to the graveyard and saw his brothers and his mother, and one brother seized him by the back of the neck and another by the legs. They were angry because he had not blown lime for them or given them food. His mother cried over him, so they let him go and he ran and ran and ran and came to Tarongen (this is a hamlet

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

158 775 828 some five miles away, he had not had time to go there in reality before he was caught), and then he came back and took the road to the old village (in which the brothers had died) and one of the *urar* told him to come along with them. Then his son came and took his arm and told him he must not run after people, and brought him back to his own house, and he went to sleep. Since then his back and his legs had been hurting him. He looked terribly thin and worn, like a person recovering after a long illness.

The third case, which followed seven days after the one just described, was that of Tchiriv, a young man aged about twenty-five. He was lying on the front verandah of one of the huts, during a dance, when he suddenly jumped up and ran about shouting and throwing in all directions the pile of logs which were kept under the verandah for use as firewood. The people all ran away and shut themselves into their houses. He seized hold of a big *mabu* (musical instrument made of a hollowed log with a mouthpiece of coco-nut, an article of value) belonging to a neighbour, and smashed it all to pieces. Presently four of the younger men rushed up to him together, and seized him, and brought him, kicking and [755] struggling, to a bench outside one of the huts, where they held him down, screaming, while another man blew powdered lime over him.[1] Presently he quietened down and was put to bed in his hut. The next day he remained indoors, and they said he was sick. Matarē said he didn't know that he had broken Togen's *mabu*; when they told him he would be very sorry and would pay for it. [788 177] Matarē told me that Tchiriv said he had been to the graveyard to get some coco-nuts from the trees there, and because the priest had forbidden it, he did not make a fire and burn some taro for the *urar*, so that they should not be angry with him for taking coco-nuts from their ground. So the *urar* were angry with him and made him mad. I did not see him at all that day until the evening, when he came out of the hut, which was very near to my house, and walked past my fence with his eyes turned away. I took no notice of him at that time, but next day when I found him standing by the fence, looking sheepish, I made a friendly remark to him. He seemed startled, but soon after came up on to my verandah and

[824] [1] There is also a plant, called *pindī*, the leaves of which, if chewed with the betel-mixture and spat on to the head of the affected person, will cause the *urar* to leave him.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

seemed to be himself again, but he did not want to talk about his experience. The villagers said he had these attacks more often than other people.

It is perhaps relevant to mention here that some weeks later the same man, when talking to me about love magic, told me that he had an *urar* that belonged to him particularly. His name was Butchiar, and he showed him the magic in a dream. He said that when he wanted to know anything, such as what 'medicine' to use in a given case, he asked Butchiar, who told him. Tchiriv had no particular reputation as a magician among the villagers, and no one seemed to take either him or Butchiar very seriously, but once when they began calling a young man whom I knew as Kakari by the name of Bori, I asked the reason for the change, and Kakari said that Tchiriv had given him the new name, saying that Butchiar had told him to do so.

The fourth case, which took place some three months later, was that of Minka, a middle-aged man, who rushed round the village throwing logs about. He said afterwards that Maravin's *urar*[1] made him mad, because it was angry about Maravin's grandson, and told Minka that the boy, Kiram, was not getting enough to eat. While he was alive he always looked after him. A young man who heard Minka telling me this said that there were several houses where the boy was given food, and that the *urar* had lied!

The fifth case, Togen, also a middle-aged man, occurred two months after the fourth. It so happened that I was away from the village all day, so I did not see the man during the attack, which was reported to have been a mild one. When I questioned him later, he could give me no information about it whatever.

While talking over with me the episode in which Pinari had figured, my servant said that if he wished he could call the spirit (*auat*) of one of the important men belonging to his family to come and stop inside him, then if he were angry with a man he could send the spirit to kill that man. As long as he was kind to the spirit and gave it food it would not make him mad. Every time he ate he would have to put some food up in the rafters of the house in a special place. If he did not the spirit would be angry and make him mad and he would go about chasing people. He was very serious throughout the talk and ended by saying: "This is really true about the Kanakas (the name used by the natives for themselves when

[1] Maravin is the old man who had died (on May 10, see pp. 484, 515.)

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

talking to white people, and by the white people for them) but the white men say it is nonsense.'

I was also told about a man named Tatsinan, living at the village of Tendu, who has a little house where he sleeps with the *urar* and feeds them and gives them areca-nut. No one but himself may go into it. The *urar* come to him there and talk with him.

Discussion

The occurrence among Papuans and Melanesians of states of hysterical dissociation has been discussed by Seligman (1929, p. 199 and Huxley Lecture, 1932, p. 227, &c.). In the instances quoted by him, while 'there is wild excitement and threats of assault on all and sundry', no serious injury was done, and for this among other reasons he differentiates these outbreaks from the far more serious condition known among the Malays as *amok*. The only evidence I can supply on this aspect of the question is the statement of the natives that men were sometimes injured or killed by persons who were *iburar*. It is possible, of course, that such injuries may have been received, as in a case quoted by Seligman, 'in the struggle to restrain the patient'. This seems to be the same condition as that described in the papers above referred to, and in a more severe form by Fortune (1932, pp. 54–5) who relates it to the Malay *amok*. In this I think he may be mistaken, for I doubt whether these individuals can strictly be described as 'out to kill' in the sense that this phrase could be applied to the *amok*-running Malay.

A similar condition is described by Ivens (1927, pp. 191 ff.) among the Melanesians of the SE. Solomons. But I never heard of people in this state, in the villages known to me, being employed as professionals 'to ascertain the cause of sickness', or for any other reason. In my experience they were regarded by their fellow villagers as mad, and no notice whatever was taken of anything they said—which was generally unintelligible.

I did not meet with any instance of compulsory imitative actions such as are described by Clifford in Malays afflicted with *lâtah* (*Studies in Brown Humanity*, 1898, pp. 186–201) and in the aborigines of Siberia by Czaplicka (*Aboriginal Siberia*, 1914, chap. xv).

Discussing the cause of these and similar outbreaks, Seligman (1929, p. 198) thinks it probable that some of them are due to malaria. It will be noted that in three of the cases observed by me

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

following incident, which was told by a man who claimed to be related to the *urar* Mategin:

There is a place in the river where the water swirls round, just as if it were boiling, but it is not hot. There are a lot of fish in it. They are *urar* fish. There is one fish which is black, with red and white marks round its mouth, and hair like a man's, the fish is an *urar*. When he is an *urar* his name is Mategin, he walks about at night, then he looks just like a big tree. He goes to Soraken, to Torrikorri, and to Saposa (all these places are on the other side of the bay). The water belongs to him. A man named Takoman, who used to work for white men in the time of the Germans (i.e. before the war, when this island was a German dependency, and its white population was largely German), lit some dynamite[1] and threw it into the middle of the water among the fish. The dynamite flared up. The fish did not die, not one single fish was killed. Takoman went to look for the fish. All the *urar* were angry with him: 'Why do you try to kill us with dynamite?' Then he became *iburar* all the time. He did bad things, he thought about nothing but women. (Here follow details which indicate that the man was a sexual maniac.) His relatives could have cured him if they had taken some of the water from the pool belonging to the *urar* and poured it over his head and made a feast. But they were so angry with him because he shot dynamite in a river which is taboo, that they would not make the medicine, so he remained *iburar*, and got worse and worse till he died.

I give below another illustration of the transformation of *urar* as typical of this kind of story, of which there are a number in my collection. They are all told as actual happenings, distinct from those that are recognized to be merely tales.

There was a man who went fishing at dead of night in the open sea. Just before dawn he saw an *urar* come up, he walked above the water (his feet about a foot from the surface, distance shown by a gesture). He pursued the man in the canoe, the man paddled away. The *urar* turned into a shark, he came after the canoe. The canoe stopped. The shark climbed up on to the outrigger. The man cursed it. The shark turned into an *urar* again, and moved about above the water. Then he turned into a *kitatō* (a large round fish, possibly a groper). He reared up, he wanted to throw himself down on the top of the canoe so as to upset it. The man paddled hard, he got away and went farther out to sea. The *kitatō* turned again into a shark. Then dawn broke, the shark became an *urar* again and disappeared. The man went ashore at his own village. He told all the people. They all said: 'Oh rubbish, you are fooling, where

[1] Dynamite is used by planters to stun fish; the natives are forbidden to use it except under supervision, but they get hold of it when they can.

[126]

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

126 (1923, p. 188) as regards point (*c*), which requires that 'the
159 dreamer should be asked of what each incident or figure makes him think', met with little success, the usual response being 'I thought it was true'.

FREQUENCY OF DREAMING

154 No data as to the frequency of dreams among these people can
159 be obtained from my collection, as even had I carried out my inquiries with more regularity than circumstances did in fact permit, it would still have been impossible to take note of the whole of any one person's dreaming, and there could be no check upon the completeness of the record. It is my impression, however, that, on the whole, dreams were much less frequent than among ourselves, so far as my limited experience goes, though I understand that very great individual differences occur in our own society. It is noteworthy that on more than one occasion the reason alleged for not having dreamed was that the previous day had been one on which nothing particular had happened. It is certainly a fact that on the morning after a day of excitements, such as the ceremony in the taro garden described in Chapter IX, there was always a number of dreams to record. It should perhaps be added that such days of excitement are, as a rule, accompanied by the consumption of more food than usual, including quantities of taro-and-coco-nut pudding, not an everyday article of diet, and certainly not markedly easy of digestion. One man said that he only dreamed when he played around a lot, or went down to the beach where there were rocks and caves. The explanation of the latter condition may lie in the fact that many of these rocks and caves are supposed to be the haunts of *urar*, and are thus connected with feelings of fear which may give rise to dreams in which the *urar* figure.

THEORIES OF THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF DREAMS

●828 An endeavour to ascertain the ideas current among these people as to the cause of dreams elicited the following replies: 'You sleep, something goes away out of your head, when you wake it comes back.' 'The men who have died before send dreams to you when you sleep.' 'When we dream, the people who are dead come and
828 talk to us.' 'In dreams we go and stay with the people who are
774 dead.' 'I think when we dream our *abin* go and stand up with all the men who fought in the old days' (*abin* is the word used for a

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

man's shadow, his reflection in a glass or in a pool of water, or his 828 ●
'spirit' while he is still alive, but never for the spirits of the dead, 174
the word for which is always *urar*). On one occasion a man, after telling me his dream, asked me: 'Where does our spirit (using the word *abin*) go when we dream?' I said I didn't know. Then he said: 'The night fools us; we see something in our sleep and we think it is true.'

A more sophisticated explanation, given by a young man of 828
Petats, who had had some contact with white people, runs as 177
follows: 'If a man eats too much, and then goes to sleep, his belly is too full, and the blood in his skin turns round and round all the time, and the blood runs into his eyes while he is asleep; then he sees a bad man, just like the men who are dead; the man wants to fight him. Or else he sees a friend belonging to another place who comes and talks to him.'

They divide their dreams quite definitely into two classes. One 828
informant, talking pidgin-English, said to me: 'Some dreams are true, some are gammon.' 'Gammon' is used in pidgin-English for anything false or deceiving, for nonsense, or for a deception intended to tease. In telling dreams which they class as 'gammon' they often conclude the account by saying: 'I got up and said, "Oh, what have I been doing, I have been dreaming, that's all".' Or, as one man put it, 'Then I woke and thought it was true and I was very sorry, and I went to look, and it was all right, so I knew the night had deceived me.'

Of the dreams of the other class—those held to be 'true', it is 828
fair to say, as Dr. Seligman suggests (1932, p. 216), that 'the dream 787
is a significant mental element in waking life upon which a man may be ready to act and for which he is prepared to suffer'. Instances of this are not wanting in my collection. If a man dreams of cohabiting with a woman who is taboo to him, it is as bad as if he had actually done so. After telling how he had dreamed of going to fish for bonito and being pursued by a shark, the dreamer volunteered the statement: 'If there had been a cry of "*Atūn*" (bonito, see p. 327) to-day I would not have gone out, if there is one to-morrow I will not go either, but after a few days it will be all right.' Well knowing the excitement and the rush to put to sea that invariably attend upon the cry of '*Atūn*', I realized that to refrain from joining in the expedition was a very real deprivation which would only be tolerated under pressure of an equally real

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

828 787 fear. The dreamer added: 'If I had dreamed that a man was lying asleep and that I stepped over him, it would mean that the shark would not eat me.' As usual, however, he could not explain why such an incident should bear this meaning.

Again, to dream of falling from a coco-nut tree means that some one will die. If the dream is that another man falls from the tree, the dreamer will tell him next morning and warn him not to go up. Further evidence of this is supplied from Pororan in material collected by Mr. Gordon Thomas, which I quote with his permission:

> A man will often dream that a relative or friend is ascending a coco-nut tree or going out in a canoe, and will see in his dream that the relative or friend will fall out of the coco-nut tree or is capsized from his canoe. He will tell the one dreamt of about his dream and will warn him not to do as he has dreamt. Sometimes they will laugh at the dreamer and will take no notice of the warning. At such times it is usual that the dream will come true and the accident will happen.
>
> Some men more than others have the gift of prophetic dreams. Hakaria has on several occasions dreamt of seeing a child taken away by a spirit during the night. On the following morning the child has been dead.

Conversely, dreams are also thought to ensure success. 'If a man dreams of hunting pig, he takes the dogs to the bush next day and [153] gets one.' In view of the known susceptibility of the native to suggestion, it is not unlikely that such dreams as this would be stimuli to successful effort.

It is recognized that some people are able to interpret dreams, but I did not hear of an instance in which such a person was actually consulted as to the meaning of a dream, either with or without payment. No reference was made in our discussions to this being done. But it may be. Some people said that if they had bad dreams they did not like to tell them to anybody.

'RECIPROCAL' DREAMS

159 Several instances of dreams in which two people were concerned came to my notice. Unfortunately, I did not check any of them by questioning the other people concerned, so I cannot offer corroborative evidence. They seem, however, to be sufficiently interesting to record at their face value.

A man may dream of having connexion with a woman and the woman

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

No. 4. Bwapip (adult male).

When I was asleep last night, an *urar* came and lifted me up, and took me to Ura'o (part of the beach below the cliffs on which the village is situated), and turned me round, and took me to the shore, and then took me into the sea. He saw a big wave, and said: 'Go on, what are you waiting for? The sea is clear now, there are no waves.' He looked at the rough sea and threw me into it, and I called out from a big wave; it threw me on to a stone, and I called out: 'Who is beating me? I lay down. There were no men there. I thought there were some men, and I got up and went to the shore, and tried to stand up, but I fell down on to the sand. There were no men there, only *urar*. All the *urar* beat me, and they brought me to some place, I was dead; and they carried me to a hole. They put me in the hole, and I lay there; it was a very big hole. I lay there for a long time, and then the *urar* came and made me get up again. I stood up and laughed, and did not think about my skin, which had disappeared; there I was without my skin. Then I went back to my village, and all the people asked me: 'Where have you been?' I said: 'I don't know, I have been in a hole. I think the *urar* came and lifted me up.' 'No, you know, you have been talking to the *urar*.' They all made *menak* (ceremonial pudding) because I had come back, all the people made it; then they called all the *urar* and they all came and ate the *menak*. This is a good dream, it was pleasant to see. If a dream is bad, when the man wakes up he feels sick. When I woke up I felt well, I was not sick.

Of the sixteen dreams which deal with individuals, four are concerned with the death of the dreamer, who in three of them came to life again.[1] The fourth was a dream of suicide (No. 35, p. 569). Four portray the death of persons (actually living) known to the dreamer, and identified by name, and four refer to the death of persons unknown or unidentified. One is the dream of a funeral; it occurred on the night following the attendance of the dreamer (a woman) at a ritual wailing. Four are concerned with people recently dead, and form a link with the *urar* dreams, since the recently dead are in process of becoming *urar* (see p. 506). Some of them bear traces of missionary influence, as will be seen from the following example:

No. 43. Watchiu (adult male).

I dreamed about Baki, that he died. The teacher at Moasng (a

[1] In this connexion it should be noted that these people do not distinguish between death and unconsciousness due to illness or a faint. The same word is used for both, and ritual wailing will be started for a person in the latter condition, to cease suddenly when consciousness returns.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

woman that she was taken by *urar* to the place of the dead and saw her mother: 'This was a good dream; I was glad to see my mother.' One man said to dream of the dead means that the dead man wants to speak to you, another that it is a sign that the dead wish you to join them. 'To see them in a dream makes him frightened.'

4. It is bad for a mother to dream of her children, and is interpreted to mean that the child will die.

With reference to the dreamer's condition on waking, on which so much stress is laid by the narrators, it is probable that this may, in some cases at least, have an actual physical basis, due either to a mild degree of malaria, or possibly to indigestion or some kindred physical cause. As previously noted, dreams are apt to follow upon days of excitement, with which festive occasions a more than usually lavish supply of food is generally connected. But the word used is ambiguous, and does not necessarily mean actual physical sickness, but rather a feeling of 'malaise' which may be as much mental as physical. It is, indeed, a fact that no very clear distinction is drawn between the two, for the seat of painful emotions, in the view of these people, is the stomach. The further implications of this 'affect' are discussed on p. 582.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Having now considered in detail the kind of incidents that occur in the dreams in my collection, it remains to discuss the significance of the collection as a whole. For this purpose it is convenient to adopt the classification proposed by Seligman (1923, p. 198), following Ernest Jones, which is as follows:

1. Dreams 'that are both sensible and intelligible, telling a connected story of the everyday world, the meaning of which is obvious . . . the mental processes resemble those of waking life'.

If we include dreams about *urar*, which are, as has been shown in other portions of this book, a very real part of the 'everyday world' to these people, the great majority of the dreams in my collection come under this head. As far as their 'manifest content' is concerned, they can be very simply related to recent happenings in the village, with which they are often connected by the dreamers themselves. It is noteworthy that there is no case which obviously goes back to the childhood of the dreamer, and but few relating to events long past. This agrees with the suggestion of Rivers (1923, p. 104): 'It is probable that dreams always arise out of recent

5: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930)1935
ON6 Buka ON6

757 [278] For internal use, a decoction is prepared by steeping certain leaves in water, which is then drunk by the patient. Only one of several plants named in this connexion could be identified, *kabku* (*Scleria lithosperma*).

Children's Diseases

They fear very much for their children a sickness called *mĕmim*, in which a thick yellow coating appears on the tongue [753] which may choke the child. It is thought to be caused by someone who wishes to injure the child's parents, out of jealousy or other cause, making " bad medicine " to bring about the child's death. For treatment, certain leaves are rubbed between the hands and steeped in water to make a drink. Six different plants were named, none of which could be identified from my pressed specimens.

[753] Another affection peculiar to children is called *bin*. It reduces the child to skin and bone. It is supposed to occur when the child's mother has failed to observe the food taboos appropriate [278] to the period of lactation. To treat it, scrapings of the bark of a mango tree (*bĕ*) are mixed with lime in a little water and rubbed on the child's abdomen.

[753] Failure on the part of the mother to keep the food taboos may also result in the child getting the sickness *kabets*, which is thus described : " It fastens the child's neck, and then goes into his belly and makes him die." [828] (The word here translated " die " is used of temporary unconsciousness as well as of actual death, it being thought that the person dies and comes back to life again when he recovers consciousness. Wailing begins as if for the dead, to cease abruptly when the patient comes round.) A child whom I saw, said to be suffering from *kabets*, had convulsions. His grandmother massaged his body with a yellow liquid made by soaking in water the bruised leaves of the tree *papets* (unidentified). As she continually dipped her hands covered with powdered lime into the bowl, its contents gradually thickened. She called my attention to this, saying it was the sickness coming out of him.

757 278 When a child's head is hot with fever it is washed with water in which the leaves of *obŏb* (Hibiscus) have been soaking.